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ABSTRACT

American workers change jobs more frequently than workers in older industrial countries. The movement from a manufacturing economy to a service economy involves many job changes for workers. Consequently, workers need flexibility. Counselors are challenged to help clients view life holistically, recognizing the dimension of quality of life. Clients need to be helped to understand what is needed for their satisfaction. Counselors can use instruments such as interest inventories to assist clients. A new theory of career has been proposed which suggests that one is employed by life and thus must have some degree of self-knowledge. This theory, called LIFECAREER, involves inner and outer sources of information. Life is the process and career is the direction. This theory recognizes that although individuals may know what life work is essential for satisfaction, they may place barriers in their way. In counseling, clients are asked to list five significant life events. Life events are then identified and explored. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction are discussed. Client and counselor then examine emerging patterns. Finally, clients can synthesize and articulate life patterns.
(ABL)

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LIFECAREER COUNSELING

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Johns Hopkins University

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SUMMARY

Everyone brings to life, and work, a basic need to perform meaningful work. Many people have trouble articulating their calling or mission. Some, for a variety of reasons, have not had the opportunity necessary for self reflection and assessment that leads to a true understanding and acceptance of what is unique, appropriate and compelling.

Once an individual gets in touch with this basic calling to meaningful life work, that person's decision-making becomes purposeful; implemented with greater confidence.

The structured counseling technique described in this article supports a client in the discovery and clarification of the intense personal definition of meaningful work. Reflection on significant life experiences uncovers themes and patterns which recur during the client's lifetime. Counselor and clients agree that the goal of the session is to enable the clients to clearly and concisely state their mission or calling in general terms. Further, the clients understand that living out this passion allows for innumerable occupational opportunities.

LIFECAREER Counseling Model

1. INTRODUCTION: Exploration of LIFECAREER Theory
2. RECOLLECTION: Identification of five significant life events
 - A. Identification: Description of the event in terms of time and place
 - B. Exploration: Discussion of feelings around the event and the discovery of the reason those feelings emerged
3. SATISFACTION/DISSATISFACTION: Acknowledgement and discussion of both in the current setting
4. PATTERNS: Recognition of patterns and trends
5. SYNTHESIS: Consolidation of new awareness based on exploration of past and current issues
6. ARTICULATION: Statement of what one needs to do in life to achieve satisfaction; identification of meaningful life work

American workers have traditionally changed jobs with more frequency than workers in older and more stable industrial countries. Historically, studies have shown that greater mobility occurs among younger workers trying out different occupations. (Gysbers, 1984) Demographers now tell us that the population born between 1946 and 1964 will be setting career goals requiring multiple options. (Liebowitz and Hirsh, 1984)

The growth of technology and the movement of society from a manufacturing to a service-oriented focus sets the stage for the creation and abolition of hundreds of jobs each year. Workers need flexibility. They must be prepared to make choices during their lifetime that their parents may not have faced. In light of these changeable conditions, career counselors are challenged to provide guidance to clients who reflect broader concerns than choosing "the right job." (Gysbers, 1984) If workers are to be prepared to choose a variety of occupations throughout their lifespan, basic values and needs must be identified in order to provide an appropriate basis for choice.

People look for life satisfaction. Work is only one road to that goal, therefore, the quality of life in all its complexities must be considered. Employment is only one aspect. Consequently, counselors are challenged to help clients view life holistically. More people are seeking a balance of work and leisure in their careers. (Gysbers, 1984)

If counselors look at life-as-career and an occupation as one way of living out that career, clients must be helped to understand what their basic need is for satisfaction; in other words, what is it one needs to do to feel satisfied. Posing the basic question moves one to identify needs, interests and values.

Clients indeed need to be clear on these issues. Self-reflection, counseling and the use of validated instruments such as the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory and Values Clarification exercises lead to greater self-awareness and understanding.

Many people who understand their values, interests and skills still suffer dissatisfaction in life. They are at a loss to figure out why or how to change their position. When one loses or decides to leave a job, that person faces the dilemma of choosing another occupation and may not be sure how to choose appropriately. Knowing what one does well is not knowing what is most satisfying. It is a piece of the puzzle but does not clearly point out the solution. Teaching clients how to cope with this life event is a major task of the career counselor.

Many of the current techniques (inventories, exercises) frequently do not help the client reach a more basic self-understanding. The important and often unasked question is "Who am I really and what work do I feel a need to do to feel fulfilled?"

A new theory of career that fits this broader definition has been advanced by David Tiedeman and Anna Miller-Tiedeman. They propose that one is employed by life and could therefore have a satisfying career and not be employed. (Gysbers, 1984) Few people can afford that luxury, but it has important implications for counselors.

The current theory references Tiedeman's earlier decision-making model published in 1963. (Tiedeman and O'Hara, 1963) Tiedeman's current thinking implies that a critical element was not addressed in this earlier model. The element is that one must have a clear idea of what one needs to do to feel satisfied before taking the steps outlined

in the decision-making model.

Decision-making models assume that the user can collect the necessary data to make an informed choice. If a worker makes several job choices in a lifetime, such decisions would be made more appropriately and with more confidence if the worker really knows what work one feels called to perform — what one needs to do to feel satisfied — what one's passion or mission is.

A career counselor who helps clients get in touch with their calling to meaningful work has helped the client in a very basic way. The word "vocation" comes from a Latin root meaning "to call." Vocational counseling, then, should pay attention to the client's calling or inner need/drive to perform meaningful work. This knowledge and an ability to articulate that calling or life work will influence choices.

The LIFECAREER concept posed a challenge for me. I accepted that:

1. Everyone has a vocation or calling to perform; a life work to feel satisfied.
2. Everyone has some awareness of this vocation.
3. Not everyone has the ability to articulate the knowledge clearly.
4. One needs to have a clear understanding of one's vocation in order to make choices in keeping with this calling.
5. Satisfaction comes with living out the performance of this life work or vocation/calling/mission.

Assessments, inventories and exercises commonly used by career counselors do not get at this basic understanding of vocation. Tradi-

tional counseling approaches do not invite people to find and describe their passion for work. Therefore, I have designed and tested a new counseling approach to lead clients to deeper self-understanding and an ability to articulate life work.

This example illustrates the effect of early life experience on life work and also shows how the client can feel responsible for carrying out a personal mission based on self-awareness.

As a student of career development theory, I investigated a variety of techniques designed to help people make appropriate career choices. Each has merit but I personally felt that something essential was missing.

Anna Miller-Tiedeman and David Tiedeman conducted a course at Johns Hopkins University during the Summer Session in 1984. They introduced their interpretation of LIFE/CAREER. They said LIFE is CAREER. To live life as career, one must be tuned into the self. One counts on and respects equally knowledge, experience and intuition. Intuition is a key element too many theories overlook. If one is to live holistically, one must recognize the inner sources of information as well as the outer sources. The Tiedemans challenged the students to help clients get in touch with life holistically and to listen carefully to intuition. LIFE is the process and CAREER is the direction. Monitoring one's own life and career involves freedom and responsibility.

I went to Tiedeman and O'Hara's model for career decision-making after this course. As I reflected on the model, I came to believe that the model could only work if one knew what one's basic need for work was. In other words, the decision-making models implicitly assume a clear sense of self is established before moving into the process.

The design I developed is based on a combination of psychodynamic

and Adlerian models. In a single, intensive interview, I work with clients to help them uncover their passion or vocation with enough clarity to assist them in making LIFECAREER choices.

The psychodynamic goals are to make the unconscious conscious and strengthen the ego so that behavior is based more on reality. (Corey, 1982) It is my theory that everyone does "know" what life work is essential for satisfaction. Some people have either placed psychological barriers in their own way, blocking recognition and understanding or they have never afforded themselves the opportunity for the introspection and reflection that will lead to greater self-awareness.

It is also likely that one's mission is related to early life experiences. This is not to suggest that life work is a reaction to childhood trauma. I submit that significant life events affect, but do not dictate, the development of needs and satisfaction.

I have not found that it is necessary to do an extensive early life analysis for clients to discover their life mission. Adlerian methodology based on Freudian principles contends that humans are capable of directing their own actions with an awareness of meaning. People are in control of their actions. From the Adlerian perspective, people are viewed more holistically. This approach makes use of a growth model and stresses finding the meaning in life. (Corey, 1982) My philosophy is compatible with this approach. Further, the work I have done with clients seems to support the Adlerian assumptions.

For example, one client grew up in a household where the father was a dominant character who often demeaned and verbally abused the wife. The wife was extremely submissive and sacrificed many of her personal goals and interests in order to preserve a semblance of

harmony. The client recollected feelings of frustration and anger based on the perception that the mother never realized her full potential as an individual. This client finally articulated her mission in life work as needing to help people reach their potential. She loved being a facilitator for change in someone else that resulted in greater self-knowledge and awareness and the ability to reach out and move toward goals. This client had spent satisfying years staying at home to raise her children while active as a volunteer for philanthropic organizations. Later, she worked as an academic advisor and counselor. These activities reflect life work or mission, resulting in a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction for the client, also representing a variety of ways to carry out her mission. The client now knows that in order to maintain a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment, she will have to pay attention to that need. The options for carrying out her life mission will change as the client ages but the client is confident she will always be able to find an outlet for this need.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MODEL

I relied on the psychodynamic philosophy and a technique developed by Drs. McKelvie and Friedland (1978) to put together a structured interview process. In a single intensive session, the client can reflect and come to a deeper awareness of essential need and translate that need into terms that make sense in choosing work.

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the interview, I briefly state the theory of LIFECAREER, emphasizing that career is not synonymous with a job. Each

person has a vocation, mission, passion or need to perform meaningful work. When one is doing this work, one finds there is satisfaction. When one is not, dissatisfaction results. It is that simple.

The goal of the session is to help the client gain a deeper awareness of this need and to understand it well enough to articulate it. I believe that everyone has the knowledge but it is often buried in the unconscious.

The first phase of the interview sets the climate for the rest of the session. It is important that the client accept the principle of the process. Every client I have met has accepted the theory. They are seeking help because they are basically confused. The idea that there is a vocation or innate calling/need to perform a meaningful life work seems to make sense to everyone.

Initially, I had some doubts that all clients would be open to this approach. However, their unhappiness and urgency to develop purpose and direction seems to leave them open and willing to proceed on that basis.

RECOLLECTION

Next, I ask clients to list five significant life events. I caution them not to censor what emerges. One client hesitated to discuss a homosexual relationship. I told her we did not have to discuss the event if she felt uncomfortable but we should list it if it was significant. As that particular interview progressed, the client gained trust and was able to fully explore the event.

I take care to point out that significant is not "good" or "bad," just important. I encourage the client to just let the process happen. It does not matter if the events are all recent, all childhood or both.

The important thing is to just examine what comes into consciousness.

I use a note-taking system to record phrases so that I can concentrate on what the client is saying and on the non-verbal behavior. The notes are to assist me in the session. I tell the client that I need to put down a few words because they are telling me their story, not mine, and I use the notes to keep me on target.

In the ensuing steps, each event is examined independently and completely before moving on to the next.

IDENTIFICATION

Returning now to the first event, I ask the client to try to put the event into a time frame. Many clients have mentioned marriage as a significant event, but there are as many variations on this theme as there are clients. I try to help them by asking why they mentioned marriage. I ask if it was the decision to marry, announcing it to parents, taking the vows, leaving for the honeymoon, the consummation . . .

Occasionally, a client will identify an event that is really a process. It is important that, at this stage, the counselor let the client lead. The goal is clarity so that the client can discuss the event in concrete terms.

EXPLORATION

Once there is agreement between myself and the client as to what the event really is, I ask the client about their feelings associated with the event. This is a critical stage because the client begins to move deeper into the self and this can be painful. Encouragement and support are essential.

One client mentioned his parents' divorce as a significant event.

The moment he recalled was when his father left the house, never to return. He described feeling of isolation and guilt. He told how he walked into the coat closet and just stood among the coats in the darkness. He said he needed to feel protected. The closeness of the space and being surrounded by the garments helped him get through that moment and to create a sense of security. Moving into the closet was a search for security as well as a running away.

The counselor needs to pay close attention to language in this stage. Specific words used to describe feelings should be noted. The same words tend to reappear in each event as patterns emerge.

The other essential element of this exploratory stage involves working with the client in an attempt to describe why such feelings occurred. Clients often state that they do not know why they felt a certain way. Directed reflection and more exploration around the event usually allows the client to uncover these reasons.

For example, the client whose father left the home felt isolated and afraid. He was able to explain, with help, that he thought he had done something wrong and it was his fault that his father had left. His ability to articulate this memory and the feelings associated with it helped to build his pattern of LIFECAREER.

SATISFACTION/DISSATISFACTION

Once the client fully examines past life events, client and counselor move on to the present situation. Most clients seek career counseling because they are experiencing a deep sense of dissatisfaction. They need to discuss this feeling.

Occasionally, I have asked clients to define what brings happiness

and energy to their lives. Often, they find this difficult because of their confusion. Dissatisfaction dominates and the session seems to work more smoothly, in most cases, by looking at that dissatisfaction first. In any counseling setting, it is necessary to look for clues from the client but my experience has shown dissatisfaction is usually the primary concern.

The client begins by explaining the unhappiness using concrete examples. An advertising manager told me she loved her work. However, she had to submit her ideas and plans to a supervisor, though she was working directly with clients. Repeatedly, the supervisor mandated changes in her design. She said that 90% of the time she was right about the wants and needs of the clients. She was then placed in the uncomfortable position of renegotiating with the client and her supervisor.

Responding to verbal and non-verbal clues, I helped her uncover her source of discontent. She finally agreed that she needed to carry out a project to completion with more autonomy. As she explored, she told me that in all her life activities, this was an essential element. Even when she made a special dessert, if anyone else "got into the act," it diminished her satisfaction. She no longer felt the project was hers and in fact, lost interest. This was a new insight and important to honest articulation of what she needed to do to feel satisfied.

PATTERNS

After a discussion of satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction, client and counselor together look for the patterns that have emerged. The description of past events and current issues will reveal significant

repeated factors. Certain words will consistently reappear.

A young woman, very successful in previous sales positions was depressed and almost immobilized in a new marketing position. Throughout the interview, she pointed out how much she enjoyed talking to people and finding out what motivates them; "finding their hot button," was how she described it. She discussed her ability to effectively communicate throughout her life. Effective was a key word. She needed to find a person's motivator, and, when she could match that person's need with a product or service, she was fulfilled.

The new position put her into a different relationship with clients and she no longer felt "effective." Recognition that matching a person's needs to what she could offer and the sense of accomplishment that brought as a lifelong pattern was a new insight.

SYNTHESIS

The new awareness of lifelong patterns associated with satisfaction sets the stage for putting together the pieces of information collected throughout the session. The client works to articulate with clarity and truth, the meaningful life work that emerges from a basic drive for satisfaction. During this phase, the client will re-state some of the findings in an effort to get at the root of the issue. The counselor needs to reflect back and pursue the client's verbal and non-verbal leads. It is essential to continue the focus on need versus wants, what really brings joy or satisfaction to activities and what element is basic to achieving meaning.

It may be necessary to point out that, though one has ability in a certain area, that ability may not be related to need. One client described a variety of managerial skills he had developed. Further

probing allowed him to see these were important to his role but not essential to his satisfaction. Through discussion, he isolated problem-solving as the thing he most loved to do.

ARTICULATION

What remains is for the client to develop a statement that defines his meaningful work. The client who identified problem-solving at the end of the synthesis stage found it relatively easy to state his life work: helping individuals and/or organizations identify and solve problems. He loved the entire process and needed to identify and solve the problem. This client was looking for a job at the time of the interview. He recognized that one activity he previously had enjoyed was teaching because it involved the process he found meaningful. He has since taken a teaching position and finds it fulfilling.

What are the implications for the client who can articulate meaningful life work? The understanding, in my experience, enables clients to make choices and choose activities and/or occupations that provide satisfaction by meeting a basic need.

When a client is unhappy in a job or feeling unsuccessful in a job search, knowledge of the passion, mission, joy or life work gives clear direction to the client. Since that knowledge is basic, and feels right, it appears foolish not to follow the lead from within.

Clients who have made occupational changes as a result of this insight report a strong sense of self-confidence in decision-making. Not every decision leads to Utopia, but clients believe that they are working in the right direction.

One young woman left a successful job with a prestigious firm to begin her own business. She needed to "own the whole process."

When we last spoke, she felt confident she would do well. She had a good product and the skills to market it. She had full control of the process, which was basically important for her. Her skills allowed her to succeed.

Another young man knows that he must make music. For him, that translates to composition and performance. He has kept a part-time job that he enjoys and is pursuing a more independent route. His first decision to set up a studio was not successful. He believes the idea is on target but the setting was inappropriate.

No one said life/work would be easy! It will, however, be appropriate. When people know what their like-work or vocation is, they give themselves permission to pursue it. "Life works," as Anna Miller-Tiedeman often says. "It may not work the way we think it should, but it works."

This technique assists the client to understand the importance of meeting basic personal needs and to articulate the need appropriately. There is no rightness or wrongness to vocation. Acceptance that vocation is real, compelling and satisfying allows the client to creatively consider alternatives for action based on a positive concept (do what one needs to do for a satisfying life) as opposed to a negative one (my needs are not valid so I must choose something valued by others).

A career counselor who can help clients get in touch with their calling or vocation or meaningful life work has helped the client on a fundamental level.

SUMMARY

I interviewed 25 clients in sessions that ran from 55 to 120 minutes. All clients stated that they had come to a deeper knowledge of themselves in light of vocation or calling. Some are more comfortable because they believe in the validity of the insight. It comes from within themselves.

A client once accused me of knowing the "answer" for her before the session began. I assured her she brought the answer with her to the interview. By my reflective listening and her hard work in defining and refining her need, we worked together to discover and articulate her truth. A counselor has no answers, only the skill to help the client put away the layers of misunderstanding to find a basic need for meaningful work and the value in that truth.

The concept of vocation can be the key to unlock the secret of what one needs to do to feel satisfied in life; to discover how self awareness and appropriate life choices are interdependent. Counselors can assist clients to develop an understanding of their personal needs. Clients who work toward a valid definition of vocation can use this insight and ability in life/career decision-making.

Building skills in self assessment, values clarification, resume construction, interview techniques, time management and assertiveness training takes on more meaning and practicality when developed with the knowledge of vocation.

This life/career technique can be a powerful career counseling tool and can be considered an appropriate step regardless of the development of other career skills.

As with any other counseling method, this is not the only and right answer. It does help a client find a piece of personal truth which enables

progress. Counselors who help clients and find an exciting and satisfying life work are living out their calling.

I submit that counselors who introduce this technique in an initial interview will find skill building enhanced by the client's recognition and acceptance of his calling. Recognizing the validity of intuition will broaden choices and guide the client to trust his articulated self-knowledge.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

To determine the long-range effectiveness of the technique, follow-up interviews, perhaps at six and twelve month intervals after the initial session, may prove valuable. The method has a formal and reproducible structure that allows for consistency in delivery.

An instrument for determining changes in perspective and insight along with how the client perceives enhancement of the decision-making process might be a valuable way to test the efficacy of the method.

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